

Under The Sea

I navigated across the glistening black rocks, slick with moss and long trailing strands of seaweed. The cold, dark seawater swirled under my feet. I hobbled over the dips and ridges of the rock pools. I didn't even see the sodden lump of stinking seaweed, until it was too late. I slipped and fell, slamming onto the solid, damp rock. Everything went black.

I found her just drifting out to sea. She was unconscious, her face was pale, her long hair knotted and she was barely breathing. She was also a *human*. Sure, I had heard all the stories about "mysterious creatures from the land" but I never believed them, those were only for little mermaids, bedtime stories, nothing but fantasies. I grabbed her under the arms, I had to get her home, she'd be safe there. I pulled her down below the surface, my tail propelling the two of us downwards, towards the caves. I hoped she could survive underwater until I got her into an air tank. I moved like lightening through the water, dragging the dead weight of the girl behind me.

I woke up in a small, glass tank. It was long and wide, but the roof was low. I could sit up comfortably, but couldn't stand. On the other side of the glass was water. I could see the slick, green tinged walls of a cave, algae and coral were specks of colour on the otherwise dull rock face. Small, colourful fish darted around my glass prison, while larger fish swayed past lazily.

*Then I saw her. It was a girl, swimming towards me, gliding effortlessly through the water. I screamed at her, begging her to help me, to let me out. Then I saw the tail. It started at her waist, where instead of skin, there were small, shimmering scales. The tail itself was almost twice the length of her torso, and swished gently through the water as she approached. Two fins flowed from the tip of her tail, flicking from side to side. I was stunned. This could not be happening. Mermaids were **not** real. I was clearly going insane, or I was dreaming, or something. She floated up to the tank, her palms pressed up against the glass, I could see the webbed skin between her fingers. Her eyes were wide and there was a grin stretching across her face. Okay, this was definitely real.*

I examined the poor creature in the tank, her eyes wide with fear. I could hear her muffled yells and the dull thud of her palms slamming against the glass. She was quite cute really. I had considered keeping her, as a pet. Imagine, telling everybody that I had a pet *human* at home. I had heard the legends, of course. Tales of strange creatures who were like us mermaids, but with *legs*. They were odd things, legs. I examined those of the frantic human in the tank. Two long, pale, soft limbs covered in skin, ending in "feet". I couldn't even begin to describe feet. They're too strange. I don't like the look of them to be honest. I decided that it was probably best to release her back into the wild. She would be far happier in her natural habitat. First thing tomorrow I would bring her to the shore and let her go. I looked back at the tank. She was angry now, her face was red and her eyes were narrowed. I could tell she was shouting, but I couldn't hear what she was saying. Maybe she was hungry. I hoped she liked fish.

I hated fish. The stench of the lifeless, floppy salmon that had been dropped unceremoniously into the tank burned in my nostrils and made my eyes water. I huddled in the corner of the tank, inching as far away from it as possible. I had calmed down slightly, exhausted from the constant yelling and pounding. I had to think of a way out of here. I really didn't like the look of that

mermaid, or whatever she was. The way she stared at me constantly, her eyes trailing up and down my body. The way she grinned, her mouth too wide, showing pointed teeth that glinted menacingly. I feared that if I didn't act soon, I would never escape alive. Sure, she was being nice now, offering me food (albeit in the form of stinking fish), but I knew that she was plotting something. She was tapping gently on the glass now, gesturing towards the salmon that had landed on the floor of the tank a few minutes ago. I picked up the fish, its slimy skin slipping through my fingers, and hurled it against the side of the tank.

She was angry. And clearly wasn't impressed with the fish. The salmon slid slowly down the side of the tank, near my face. It left a wet trail down the glass. It was time to take her to the surface, and set her free. She clearly didn't enjoy captivity. I swam towards the tank again, gliding alongside the glass, which was smudged and dirty from the humans incessant hammering. I grabbed one corner of the tank and lifted the entire structure, grimacing as it grated against the hard cave floor. The girl was in a blind panic. She was rolling around the tank, slamming her entire body against the glass, trying desperately to break free. She didn't seem to understand that I was trying to help her, take her home. I lifted the tank easily and propelled towards the cave entrance, before taking off, swimming steadily towards the land, pushing the tank forwards.

I was going to die. I had accepted that. This mermaid girl was taking me somewhere, maybe to perform some kind of magical mermaid sacrifice, or to feed her and her mermaid friends. I was absolutely petrified. I thrashed wildly in the tank, hurling myself against the thick tank walls. It was no use. I was trapped, and doomed. My head was spinning from my struggle. I felt dizzy and light headed, and everything began to spin wildly, blurring together.

The human girl was unconscious again, her body limp and breathing shallow. I could see the shore now, and the long stretch of sandy beach, pebbled with small stones and chipped pieces of shells. I pushed the tank up onto the sand, water lapping around it. I opened the lid of the tank and tilted it onto its side, the girl tumbled out, splashing in the shallow water. I left her as she began to stir, murmuring and weakly rolling her head from side to side. As I swam back out to sea, my powerful fins allowing me to swim gracefully through the strong, swirling current, I thought of the girl. I had always thought humans were just fairy tales, fictional characters, imaginary. I suppose you never really know what could be lurking in the vast unknown of the land.

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